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AIR FORCE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED DISTRIBUTED LEARNING

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Mission: *Promote, deliver, and manage advanced distributed learning for our aerospace forces.*

The Air Force Institute for Advanced Distributed Learning, located at Maxwell AFB–Gunter Annex, formally came into being on 1 February 2000. The institute was established by the merger of three distinct organizations: the Air Force Distance Learning Office (AFDLO) and the Extension Course Institute (ECI). At that time, the AFDLO had operational control of the Air Technology Network Program Management Office (ATN PMO). AFDLO was established 7 November 1995 to serve as the focal point for all AF distance learning (DL) matters. ECI was established in 1950 as one of AU’s professional specialized schools. As the Air Force’s only correspondence school, ECI’s original mission was to provide voluntary nonresident courses for both active duty and reserve AF personnel. The ATN PMO was created in February 1996 as an outgrowth of AFIT’s Center for Distance Education and served as the focal point for the management of the Air Force’s DL satellite network, ATN. On 2 July 2001, ATN was realigned as AFIADL operating location “A.” Today AFIADL supports formal training and educational programs of the AF, ANG, and AFRes by providing career-broadening advanced distributed learning courses to people throughout the DOD and to civil service employees in all federal agencies.

Advanced distributed learning is an evolution of distributed learning (distance learning) that emphasizes collaboration on standards-based versions of reusable objects, networks, and learning management systems, yet may include some legacy methods and media. DL media include interactive television (ITV), interactive multimedia instruction (IMI), Internet-based instruction (IBI), paper-based instruction, and other instructional technologies. Advanced distributed learning (ADL) includes all DL media. In the future distance learning will also consist of instructional modules comprised of “sharable content objects” delivered through several technologies.

The ADL initiative (ADLI) is a structured, adaptive, and collaborative effort between the public and private sectors to develop the standards, tools, and learning content to provide “anytime, anywhere”

instruction to US Forces. AETC is the lead command for ADL within the Air Force. AFIADL serves as the focal point and executive staff agent on these efforts under the guidance of AETC's directorate of education.

AFIADL promotes, delivers, and manages advanced distributed learning for our aerospace forces. Over the years the mission has undergone several major changes. In 1963 when ECI started providing self-study materials for the Air Force's official upgrade training program, the institute became an essential and mandatory part of the dual-channel concept for the enlisted training program. In 1969 ECI was given the additional mission of providing study reference materials to AF enlisted personnel to use in preparing for specialty knowledge testing under the weighted airman promotion system (WAPS).

AFIADL operates in a fully automated environment. Course development, production, distribution, and student administration functions are managed on a sophisticated system of personal computers and a mini-mainframe. The data is accessible worldwide to AFIADL, ACSC, SOS, SNCOA, course authors, education service offices, and unit/base-level training sections. To profit from rapidly growing technological capabilities, AFIADL has departed from entirely paper-based curricula to include interactive television and computer-based courseware. AFIADL is, with the rest of DOD, exploring the standards required for Internet delivery and management of courses. In print-based curricula, AFIADL enhanced its efficiency and productivity by moving to a print-on-demand process for course examinations and is planning for use of new learning technology for courseware delivery.

The Air Force delivers many of its courses via ATN, an interactive television (ITV) network. ATN (<http://atn.afit.edu>) reaches 207 classrooms at 133 AF bases within the United States (including Alaska and Hawaii) and nine locations in Europe (five locations are currently being installed in Japan and Korea), with education and training programs broadcast from uplinks at Wright-Patterson (the first uplink on ATN), Maxwell, Sheppard, Fairchild, and Keesler AFBs. The connection to Europe is being made through the *Global Broadcast Service* with a gateway uplink at Norfolk, Virginia. Since its development in 1991, ATN has been used to provide continuing education and training to over 40,000 students.

AFIADL conducts a one-week course for authors to provide new writers of CDCs with the basic knowledge and experience needed to produce effective extension course materials. The course, which is offered three times a year, is a practicum in the use of instructional systems development to write and revise CDCs. During the week, new writers work under the tutelage of institute educators and gain hands-on experience in every phase of course development: writing topical statements, developing tests and text, and processing and evaluating a course. New writers also become familiar with AFIADL's procedures and become acquainted with staff members with whom they will be working.

AFIADL administers and distributes more than 450 courses. They fall into four categories: PME, PCE and training courses via ATN, specialized courses, and CDCs. The institute distributes the following nonresident courses:

PME Courses

PME courses are taken by both commissioned and noncommissioned officers. These courses teach leadership, management principles, techniques of effective communication, problem solving, analysis of professional reading materials, international relations, national decision making, and defense management. They also cover the psychology of learning, individual differences, and the techniques of teaching. The courses give students the broad skills and knowledge needed to be effective at various stages in their careers.

AFIADL distributes nonresident PME through distance learning products ranging from paper-based through CD-ROM. PME is also available by seminar or in residence through the schools.

PCE and Training Courses

AFIT and the various schools within Second AF use AFIADL's satellite network, ATN, to reach thousands of students every year to fulfill their PCE and training needs.

Specialized Courses

Specialized courses focus on technical and special subjects that are useful in many career fields. Examples are contracting, finance, and logistics courses. These courses also provide career broadening to individuals as they progress to higher levels and are required to become more knowledgeable in career fields other than their own.

Career Development Courses

CDCs constitute the largest portion of AFIADL's curricula. These self-study courses help airmen complete the task-knowledge portion of the dual-channel concept for the enlisted training program. The dual-channel concept is an on-the-job training program that requires the completion of CDC courses for skill-level upgrade—a requirement for

promotion. Airmen must complete CDCs successfully at various stages to advance in their careers. CDCs are also available on a voluntary basis for career broadening.

Air Force members can obtain further information about the institute's courses and enrollment through their base education or training office. The *AFIADL Catalog* provides up-to-date information on courses, programs, and policy and procedures. You can access the catalog on-line at: http://www.maxwell.af.mil/au/afiadl/curriculum/catalog/cattoc_fr.htm. The institute's Web page provides information about CDCs required by AFSC, available test control facilities, names and phone numbers of staff members to assist with student inquiries, and other useful information available to students all over the world. The catalog also provides information on academic credit recommendations for these courses. A list of credit recommendations for AFIADL courses also can be found in the current *Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services*. AFIADL also publishes *Curriculum Update* as a forum to discuss updates in the area of curriculum development.

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